

## Meeting King County's Climate Moment

*My plan to get King County to meet the urgency of the climate crisis and get on the frontlines of the solution*

We are in the middle of a climate crisis, the impacts of which are starting to be felt by many people across our country and region. We all deserve a healthy community built on clean energy and we know King County has the tools and the know-how to get there. Inaction has held us back, which is why we need new leadership that understands the urgency of this crisis and is willing to take on our biggest polluters. The solutions must be bold—we must address the gaps in policy and action at the local level. Even if the Trump Administration wasn't doing their darndest to make it worse, we'd still need local solutions—partnerships and policies. It's up to us!

My generation and our children's generation will face the most dire consequences of inaction, but we are already seeing the makings of a climate change-ravaged planet today. The unprecedented wildfires that darken our skies, damage our lungs, and have become new summer traditions in our state are among the first visible symptoms of the climate crisis.

Fortunately, [Seattle](#) and [Washington State](#) are stepping up to the plate to address this existential threat, but King County is not doing enough. The King County Council has spent their energy on task forces and half measures that are not cutting it—we need real climate action.

King County has set a [goal of reducing carbon emissions](#) by 25% of 2007 levels by next year. Between 2007 and 2017, King County decreased carbon emissions about 1.2%. We are not even close to being on track to meet our goal.<sup>1</sup>

Caring for the environment is not just critical for us to protect the natural resources we cherish, but it is essential to our health and our ability to live productive lives.

As campaign manager for historic ballot measures Initiative 1631, which was called "[Washington's Green New Deal](#)" months before Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was elected to Congress, and Sound Transit 3, the largest investment in public transit in our state's history, I've led the kinds of ambitious efforts we need to adopt if we're going to preserve our environment and defeat climate change. My priority is to lower carbon emissions from transportation and land use, preparing for impacts that are already baked into the climate system, while bringing about a just transition to a clean energy economy.

For King County to lead on climate, we must, as a starting point:

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<sup>1</sup> If you include the products that consumers buy in King County, which are produced with dirty energy, our climate footprint is even larger. It's one thing to set goals, it's another thing to actually hold ourselves - and our County Government - accountable.

- **Enact 100% Clean Transportation:**
  - Ensure that all of King County's vehicles are zero emission by 2028, including phasing out ALL of Metro's diesel buses, replacing all existing vanpool vehicles with electric versions, and working with manufacturers to identify solutions for difficult vehicle categories.
  - Partner with cities, businesses and the Port of Seattle to create joint purchasing programs for electric and zero-emission vehicles to assist every part of the county to end our reliance on fossil fuels.
  - Partner with regional utilities and cities to install more public electric vehicle charging, expanding electric car infrastructure for those who don't have dedicated parking.
- **Ensure Transit for All:**
  - King County runs our Metro bus system and electrifying our fleet is not enough to meet this climate moment—we must be dramatically increasing transit service and ensuring transit is reliable and frequent all across King County. No one should need to own a car to access work, school, and play.
  - Let's get free and affordable passes into the hands of everyone; especially for our low-wage and part time workers. Many major employers do not provide basic transit benefits for their workers—this must change.
- **Build 100% Clean Buildings:**
  - Require that all new residential and commercial construction in unincorporated King County uses 100% clean electricity and expand our investments and incentives to remove fossil fuels from existing buildings.
  - Expand investments and incentives to cities in King County to create the same policies, aligned with [State Initiatives for Clean Buildings](#).
  - Include a carbon metric when selecting building materials for all county capital projects, sourcing low-carbon steel, cement, glass and other materials from right here in Washington and the Pacific Northwest.
- **Build Affordable Housing and Walkable Communities**
  - Meet our county's affordable housing needs by financing housing now.
  - Create walkable, dense communities connected by and oriented around transit access.
  - Strengthen and enforce the Growth Management Act—preventing sprawl and encouraging density in urban areas and near transit protects our forested and agriculture land.
- **Protect King County's Waterways and Natural Resources:**
  - Protect and invest in King County's waterways and prepare our water and wastewater treatment plants for increased storm events as part of a broad adaptation plan.
  - Expand greenspaces and parks to increase access to the outdoors, develop opportunities to sequester carbon, and provide expanded tree canopy shade.
- **Put Environmental Justice at the Forefront:**

- Require all county agencies to use environmental health disparity mapping in order to identify impacted communities with the goal of focusing their work in order to reduce disparities.
- Ensure communities of color and tribal communities are at the table and benefiting from investments in our future.
- Prioritize the clean up of existing pollution in frontline communities.
- Create a policy framework to improve health disparities in King County through environmental investment.
- **Ensure a Just Transition:**
  - Invest in our workers and ensure we are building a just transition to a clean energy economy, including through the creation of family sustaining, union jobs.
  - Invest in apprenticeship, job training, and partnership programs with our colleges and schools.
- **Create Real Accountability:**
  - Increase transparency about carbon emissions across all sectors of the County economy and using carbon emissions to evaluate priorities of county projects.
  - Create an interactive map that details investments and enforcement actions to create public accountability and ensure the county's action are equitable.

We live in one of the most beautiful regions on Earth, let's keep it that way. Here is my full plan to protect our environment and take on the climate crisis:

### **Expand Our Best-in-the-Nation Transit System**

More than a third of King County's carbon emissions come from transportation, with the vast majority originating from single occupancy passenger vehicles. As thousands more move to our county in the coming months and years, we must create an easily accessible and fully comprehensive public transit system that takes cars off the road, reduces carbon emissions, and connects all communities to opportunity.

King County already has what has been ranked [the best metro system in the nation](#), plus, as partners with Sound Transit, we have an important role to play in our region's burgeoning light rail system.

I made a choice a few years ago to not own a car and rely on transit as my primary means of transportation, so I understand what it's like to be a frequent transit rider (the great and the not so great). I've also spent time at Transportation Choices Coalition, learning the ins-and-outs of transit policy. I know both where our service needs to improve it and how to improve it. **I'll have more to say in my upcoming transportation plan**, but I believe these are the key areas we must focus our transportation efforts.

First, we must be double down our efforts to expand bus service across King County. I led a campaign in 2014 to expand transit service in Seattle—which was the largest service expansion

in the metro's history. The 2014 measure is expiring at the end of next year and I have not seen any leadership from King County Council members representing Seattle on how to replace and expand this effort.

We need leadership to ensure that we aren't just maintaining the existing service levels but expanding the transit service investments region-wide and across Seattle. Increasing frequency and expanding Rapid Ride Routes during commuter hours is critical—but we must also be increasing service for local routes that connect our neighborhoods during non-commuter hours and we must be developing transit solutions to make it easier to travel east-west in North Seattle. Doubling down on expanding our transit service is critical to meet our climate goals.

Next, we must electrify our fleet, so our transit system minimally contributes carbon emissions. I will work with Metro to move on a faster time frame to speed up the transition to all electric buses—the county's current goal is by 2040 all diesel buses will be transitioned to electric. I would like to see it happen by 2028. Funding and intentional engagement are necessary to achieve this goal. Retiring diesel buses, replacing existing vanpool vehicles, and building and upgrading existing electric bus depots won't happen by themselves.

Metro is a huge part of King County's fleet, but the county operates many other vehicles. By 2028, all or most of these use cases will have available electric versions. County vehicles must be transitioned to electric vehicles as well—we must be at the forefront of new electric vehicle technology. I will partner with cities, businesses and the Port of Seattle to create joint purchasing programs for electric and zero emission vehicles to assist every part of the county end our reliance on fossil fuels.

We must also focus on access to transit—something that I've worked on my entire career. I'll work to expedite the implementation of light rail expansion, while also adding metro routes and expanded service hours to better serve every resident in neighborhoods across all of King County.

Let's get a Subsidized Transit Pass into the hands of every person in King County: Many of our major employers do not provide fully subsidized transit passes to their workers, including the University of Washington. That is unacceptable. I will partner with the City of Seattle and our businesses and advocates to develop strong policies to get free and affordable passes into the hands of everyone in our city and region, especially low-wage and part-time workers.

We also need to step up King County's work to make it easier to get around beyond cars and mass transit. That means partnering with cities to ensure improved walkability and biking options—safer sidewalks and extensive networks of bike lanes: making it easier to get around whether you walk, bike, ride, or roll. We must also look at parking reform and develop more sustainable parking policies, as well as growing our electric vehicle infrastructure. King County can partner with regional utilities and cities to expand public charging, ensuring electric cars aren't only for those with dedicated parking.

## **Building with an Environmental Blueprint**

The alarming intersection of the climate change, homelessness, and affordable housing crises represents the greatest immediate challenge facing our region. There are currently more than 11,000 individuals experiencing homelessness in King County, all of whom will be in the greatest danger from extreme weather events and more intense seasons as the climate crisis intensifies.

These urgent needs call us to immediate action by building more affordable housing, revitalizing our infrastructure, and designing the blueprint for the future of our county. I will discuss these ideas in further depth in my housing and homelessness plan.

Ensuring people are housed and housed densely is one of the important intersections of climate, land use, and transit. King County must be leading the charge to ensure we have the infrastructure funding (and green jobs) for much needed housing from zero to middle income levels. I will work with the Puget Sound Regional Council and utilize the Growth Management Act as a tool to incentivize and ensure local jurisdictions are zoning appropriately to densely prepare for growth and prevent sprawl that harms our environment.

King County will need to add 244,000 units of low income affordable housing by 2040. As a region we do not have a plan to meet that need. Working with key partners and stakeholders, I will make it a priority to develop a 20-year housing plan with meaningful funding mechanisms to meet our goals. We were able to develop a 20-year funding to invest in our regional light rail system, we must use the same model to do the same for affordable housing.

We need to be intentional about where we build density as well, bringing a thorough approach to zoning decisions. Orienting new growth along transit corridors will be crucial for building a connected county where transit is not only accessible, but also more convenient and affordable than driving. Additionally, taking an active role to prevent displacement—including both traditional and climate gentrification—will be an important element of this effort.

If elected, I'll work on making significant investments into our commercial building infrastructure for necessary carbon reduction retrofits. Starting with our own county buildings, we need to effectively retrofit buildings for energy efficiency and bring bold permitting requirements for new buildings.

We must expand on King County's Green Tools and Green Bonds programs, so we ensure every building in the county is built or renovated with green planning techniques. And, we should require that all new residential and commercial construction in King County is electric, rather than continuing to rely on fracked gas.

It's time to include a carbon metric when selecting building materials for all county capital projects, sourcing low-carbon steel, cement, glass and other materials from right here in Washington and the Pacific Northwest, and taking into account where materials are made and manufactured.

Most importantly, this needs to be a region-wide effort. I will work to pass legislation requiring 100% clean electric buildings in unincorporated King County, and partner with cities to adopt similar ordinances everywhere else.

### **Bringing an Environmental Justice Lens to Policymaking**

For too long, our policymaking has failed to adequately involve and consider communities of color and marginalized communities. If I'm elected, that will no longer be the case—I'll ensure environmental justice is at the heart of all policymaking with community engagement and thorough review of the potential impact of our decisions.

Communities of color, tribal communities, and low-income people have higher rates of asthma, shorter life spans, and are the first to be displaced by fires, flooding, and rising sea levels. Caring for the environment is not just critical for us to protect the natural resources we cherish but it is essential to our health and our ability to live productive lives. Institutional and historic racism that is unfortunately stitched into our social and political fabric has caused and exacerbated this challenge.

In addition to preventing future contamination, we must also clean up existing pollution. I'll prioritize county projects that address pollution in neighborhoods that have long borne the brunt of this kind of environmental racism. We must also empower tribal communities through prior and informed consent, consultation and input into environmental and land use decision making that directly and tangibly affects tribes, tribal rights, tribal lands and sacred sites.

And, I will bring environmental justice activists, leaders from communities of color, and other diverse voices to the table. Not at the end of the policymaking process, but at the beginning, collaborating to create stronger policies with every community top of mind, and none an afterthought.

By requiring all county agencies to use environmental health disparity mapping, we can identify impacted communities with the goal of focusing their work in order to reduce disparities. I am committed to moving forward an effort to ensure a Healthy Environment for All (similar to the statewide HEAL Act) that will create a necessary policy framework to inform investment priorities across King County's departments to improve health disparities in King County.

Every decision I make and policy I advocate for is rooted in this foundational truth of past and present environmental racism, and any policy I fight for must also be part of an effort to interrupt

and dismantle this reality. I believe that to be an environmental advocate you must also be committed to fighting for racial equity.

## **Protecting our Water and Natural Resources — Now and in the Future**

The disaster at the West Point Treatment Plant in 2017 brought to the public's attention the immense work and infrastructure necessary to treat our wastewater and stormwater—which is often unnoticed in the public eye until something goes wrong. As the impacts of climate change worsen we must prepare our water and wastewater treatment plants for increased storm events as part of a broad adaptation plan. It is clear that more planning and intentional engagement is necessary to ensure our infrastructure is prepared for additional growth in our region.

In my time working at the City of Seattle, I worked closely with Seattle Public Utilities to develop City Council approval for \$600 million investment in the 'Plan to Protect Seattle's Waterways'. Together with Seattle Public Utilities staff as they formed an integrated approach of investing in new combined sewer overflow tanks and in 'upstream' stormwater solutions that will result in better water quality outcomes. This was an innovative and creative strategy to substantially reduce pollution in our water. I will work to create more of these innovative solutions and such approaches are very necessary to address water quality. The City and County are currently constructing a large tunneled CSO tank to help prevent future overflow as a result of the Plan to Protect Seattle's Waterways.

One of the largest impacts on water quality is stormwater runoff from transportation infrastructure. Fuel and debris from vehicles get in our water systems and cause great harm to our fish, wildlife, and water quality. Increasing our investment in public transit is one important upstream solution to prevent debris from entering our water.

I will also advocate for good land use management, including protecting our parks and open spaces, and greater residential incentives, like [RainWise](#), that encourage rain gardens and cisterns that slow stormwater runoff.

The recently passed King County Parks levy will give the County Council additional funding to expand our conservation efforts and improve our parks. We need committed and innovative leadership that will effectively use these funds to preserve the health of our waterways and open spaces.

Expanding our greenspaces and parks must be part of our effort. With this focus, not only can we increase access to the outdoors, but we can also develop opportunities to sequester carbon and provide expanded tree canopy shade against intense sun and rising temperatures.

In Seattle, we have [plots of land](#) that have been leased significantly below market rates for community gardens and greenspaces. With rising costs, land owners are looking to sell

P-Patches and similar spaces for significant profit, eliminating these treasured local gardens. King County should be developing a long term plan using King County Parks funding and King County Conservation Futures Fund to ensure these available green spaces are preserved in Seattle and across the County.

Another area where the King County Council must lead is on the King County Flood Control District, whose board is the County Council. These resources are often spent on cement levy structures rather than critical habitat restoration and stormwater projects that can better prepare us for floods, prevent landslides, and ensure that stormwater is not entering our water systems.

On issues that involve the cleanliness of our water, we cannot afford the risk associated with disinterest and token attention to these issues. We must have engaged, intentional leadership that understands the gravity of the work at hand.

### **Prioritizing a Just Transition and Good New Jobs**

The fight against the climate crisis blends healthy communities, sustainability and access to reliable transportation as a key to provide a pathway for people to move out of poverty and up the economic ladder. As we develop plans for transit expansion and 100% clean energy, we absolutely must guarantee a just transition for workers and direct our resources toward disproportionately impacted communities.

From transit infrastructure, building retrofits, and the development of hundreds of thousands of units of affordable housing, King County should be the epicenter for thousands of new, good paying, union jobs. I feel strongly that we can reduce our carbon emissions, create new jobs in a new clean energy economy, and provide the tools necessary for workers in the fossil fuel trades to transition employment into clean energy industries.

By partnering with stakeholders in the new clean energy economy, unions, municipalities, and our local education centers, we can ensure workforce training programs, job support, and apprenticeships are available to affected workers and appealing to students looking to find a career.

King County can set an example for the nation of a strong, local economy that doesn't pollute and reduced dependence on fossil fuels without leaving workers behind. We have the opportunity to grow and support small, local, and worker-owned businesses as we create a new clean energy economy.

Any plan to tackle climate change in King County must ensure we are creating jobs, have strong project labor agreements, and provide training and apprentice programs. As we transition from fossil fuels and expand the clean energy economy, our county must keep workers in the discussion.



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Understanding our impact on the climate goes beyond what we're doing now. We need to increase transparency about carbon emissions across all sectors of the County economy, including "consumption emissions" coming from purchased goods and food systems, which represent another high emissions sector ripe for innovation and problem-solving.

Then, we need to use these metrics to drive accountability in how we're addressing this crisis, such as using carbon emissions to evaluate the priorities of ongoing and future County projects.

We have just a few years to act if we're going to do our part to address climate change and preserve our environment. This has been a driving force throughout my work, and is personal to me as an environmentalist, lover of the outdoors, and—most importantly—as a young person.

King County has to get off the sidelines and onto the frontlines of climate action. Delay is denial, and inaction is unacceptable. On the County Council, I will recognize the great urgency of this threat and adopt the innovative measures necessary to put King County at the forefront of the fight against climate change.